The Feast for the Holidays

For the feast of St. Anastasius, the families, even the least well-off in the village, even those who were in debt or who had their children at school, set the table, put on piles of focacce, cutting boards full of roasted meat on a spit, cheese, giuncata, wine, and honey, and they opened the door to those who wanted to enter to feast. Guests from nearby villages, the poor and the brats of the village, flocked like flies: The more they came, the happier the masters were, but in the afternoon, while the bells rang out and seemed to announce that in the sad world had finally begun the kingdom of God, entire heifers and columns of focaccia were distributed in equal portions (so the feast was called de su corriolu) to the guests and the poor who took home for the old disabled, the sick, and shameful women dinner, and even lunch for the next day.

Sennòra Rughitta, the wife of the owner Costantino Fadda, was very fond of this feast, which allowed her to show all the village her approval and to show that it is not necessary to be noble not to count the cost.

(from the novel *Un po’ a tutti*, from the collection *Chiaroscurro*, 1912)

The peasant societies that based their wealth mainly on primary production goods, produced by agriculture and
sheep farming, had rituals of genuine generosity. For example, before the 1816 law of closure, there were public pastures where even poor shepherds could take their livestock to pasture, and where it was possible to collect wood free for heating and cooking.

With the advent of the United Kingdom and the importation to Sardinia of a model of economic development based on private property, commerce, and the tertiary sector, with the bourgeoisie “in attack,” the traditional agropastoral model underwent a regression, and the forms of social solidarity, as described by Deledda in the novel *Un po’ a tutti*, slowly disappeared. That is, people no longer opened their houses during particular festivals and rituals and set the table for all who needed it. Roasted meat on a spit, the basis of the diet of the rich shepherd, and then cheese, giuncaia, a particular product of milk, honey, and wine, are, as you can see, all products of the agropastoral economy that, with their presence, emphasize the richness and uniqueness of the banquet.